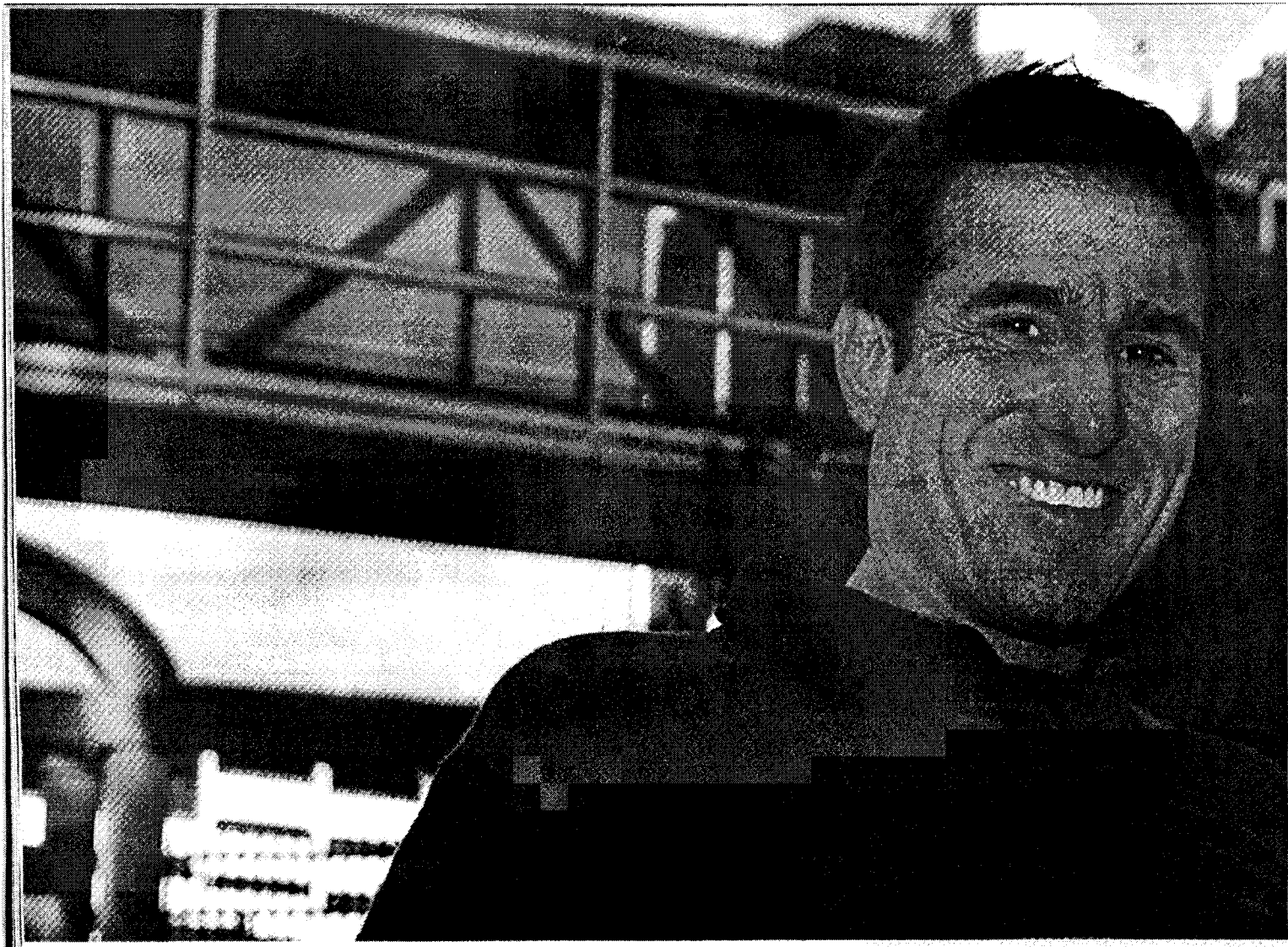


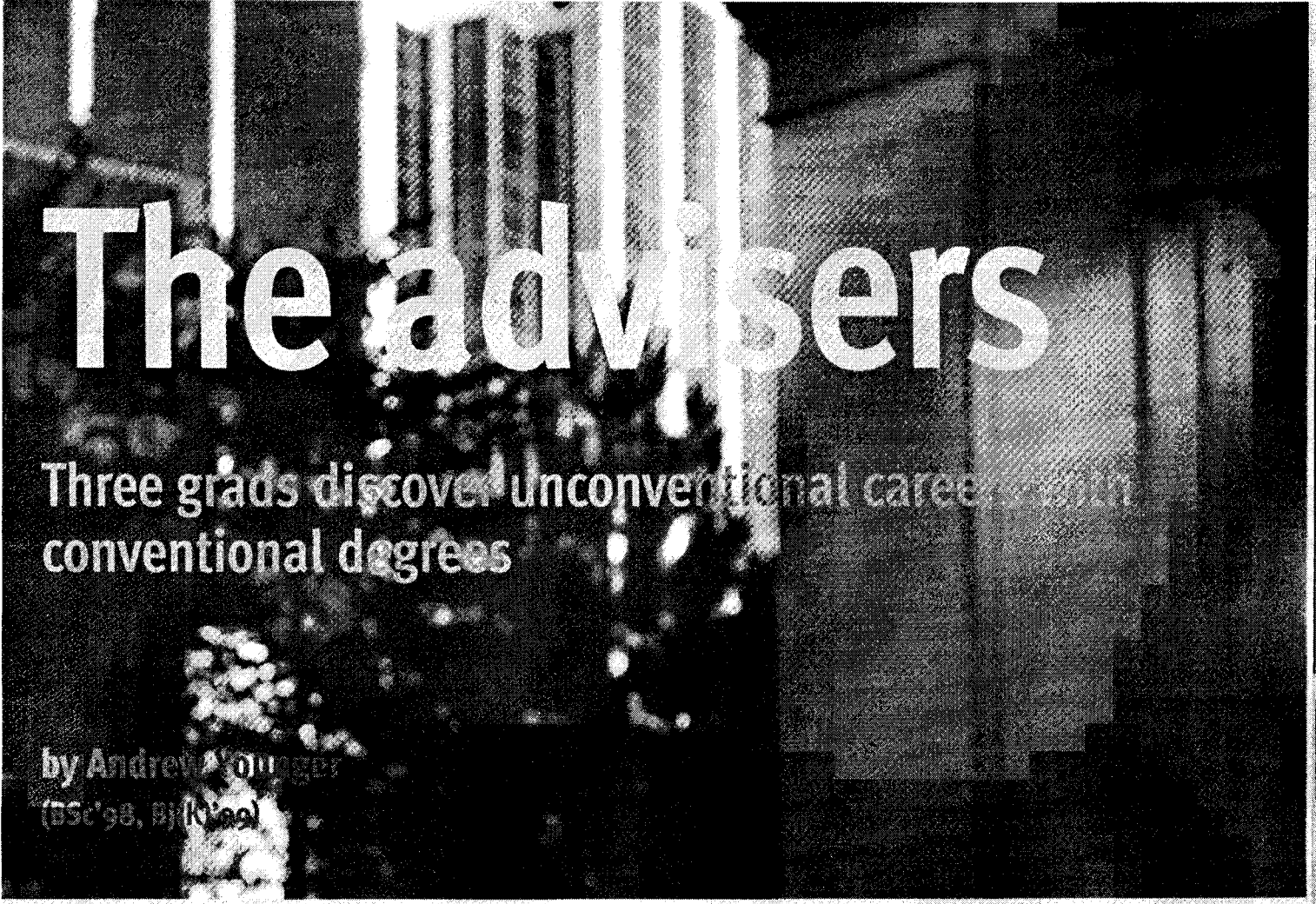
Dalhousie doesn't offer a Bachelor of Public Speaking degree. It doesn't offer a Master of Futurism and, most certainly, there's not a PhD in Books That Change Lives.

That's not to say Dalhousie's choices are limited. With 3,600 undergraduate, graduate and professional courses, the choices can, in fact, astound. But sometimes, a chosen academic direction leads to an unexpected path. For at least three Dalhousie grads, rather traditional academic studies have led to very non-traditional careers. All three detoured in ways that transformed them into internationally recognized and widely sought advisers, in Canada and the world.

## Benj Gallander
### PLAYWRIGHT & INVESTOR

You're forgiven if the word "investor" makes you nervous. With the spectacular burn-out of technology stocks still a stinging memory, and the crash in many retirement funds over the past year, "investment" doesn't conjure up warm feelings. But from the minute you meet Benj Gallander (MBA'83), in his worn sweater and faded cords, you realize this investor isn't your average Toronto capitalist.

In fact, considering that Gallander's annualized return over 10 years is over 25 per cent, with a stunning 64.8 per cent rate of return in 2001 and 47.2 per cent in 2002, you're quickly convinced there's



# The advisers

## Three grads discover unconventional careers with conventional degrees

by Andrew Younger (BSc'98, BA(Hons)'99)

Photo: Younger

something special about this guy. The media is convinced, too. Gallander writes a column for *The Globe and Mail*; he's a regular on Report on Business Television; he's appeared on Pamela Wallin Live; and he was the one CBC Radio's This Morning turned to for insight the day after the most-recent stock market crash.

Gallander was already a savvy investor and writer when he began his MBA at Dalhousie. He most certainly was not a typical MBA student.

"For my bursary work, I was assigned a case study," says Gallander. "I wrote my case study as a play. The professor threw it out and made me rewrite it in more traditional form."

Gallander rewrote his proposal but didn't jump into the business mainstream. He had no interest in working with a multinational company. Instead, his first job after graduation was with the International Hostelling Association. It was minimum wage and Gallander was thrilled when he got a 25-cent raise. Though Gallander enjoyed the job, he soon needed a change.

Not long after, some of his plays and poems were published, including The MBA-Hobo Poems (Ralph Gonads Publications), The Death of Parent God (performed at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre), and Les Toilettes, a one-man play about two men in a bathroom. Gallander added his business savvy to his publishing credits with two books – The Canadian Small Business Survival Guide, and The Uncommon Investor: A Contrarian's Guide To Investing In The Stock Market.

Though he was a published business author, Gallander's business smarts were still a well-kept secret.

"I lived in an artists' co-op in Toronto until two years ago," says Gallander. "Everyone knew me as a playwright. Then one day I was interviewed on Canada's number-one radio show about investing and people said, 'We didn't know you knew about that stuff.'"

Gallander certainly does know "about that stuff." He's become one of the best-known names in the Canadian investment world. He and business partner Ben Stadelmann are collectively known as the Contra Guys and publish a newsletter called Contra the Heard. They take their name from their investment strategy, which is contrary to what is most often done or heard in traditional investment circles. The newsletter tells subscribers what stocks Gallander and Stadelmann invest in – their stock choices are often unlike any mutual fund.

Among his rules: Gallander chooses stocks selling for less than $25, companies that have been in business for 10 years or more, and companies that have a manageable debt load. That investment strategy meant Gallander didn't invest in tech stocks when prices starting going through the roof. Shocked and surprised, some Contra the Heard subscribers were upset, believing they'd missed out on a great deal.

"We lost some of our popularity when tech stocks skyrocketed," says Gallander. "But in the end, staying away from newly minted dot-coms paid off for us because we didn't suffer the losses some people experienced."

The Contra Guys' philosophy also includes donating 10 per cent of profits to charity. In addition to writing a cheque, sharing good fortune is a philosophy Gallander practises on a personal level.

"Recently I spent three months in Nepal," he says. "I worked on anti-poverty projects helping women to set up micro-credit operations."

Along with writing plays, books and the investor newsletter, Gallander is frequently called on to speak at national public business events, such as the Financial Forum and Canadian Money Saver Seminars. It's not uncommon that 300 to 500 people come to hear him speak. Gallander has also become a guy the investment community turns to: about 15 per cent of Contra The Heard subscribers are stockbrokers and investment professionals.

Gallander is encouraged that people value his investment commentary. That said, he doesn't envision a day when the contrarian's way will become mainstream. He says it's simply human nature to buy what is hot while ignoring what is not.

He also doesn't see a day when he will move into what might be considered a more traditional job for an MBA graduate – a corporate office, perhaps. Rather, Gallander continues to write and to see his plays performed. He and his business partner continue to distribute their newsletter. And, he's just completed a cross-country swing to promote his newest book, The Contrarian Investor's 13: How to Earn Superior Returns in the Stock Market. While his approach to work and his life may be quite non-traditional, it suits Gallander just fine.

"I guess I don't really make a living," he says. "I just have a whole bunch of hobbies." dal

# Jim Carroll
## FUTURIST

When you hear Jim Carroll (BCom'79) described as a "futurist," you might expect his home to resemble something from a 1980s space cartoon. In some ways, perhaps it does. Twenty-five computers rule the Toronto-area house; each with its own purpose. One pipes Carroll's more than 17,000 (fully legal) MP3 files to speakers in the garden or specific rooms in the house. Another provides redundant high-speed Internet connections. Yet another organizes Carroll's day. But that's where the space cartoon analogy ends.

"You wouldn't walk in and say, 'This is the Jetsons'," says Carroll. "I just live five to 10 years ahead of most people."

Living ahead of others is a skill Carroll has turned into a career. A self-professed futurist, he writes books about the latest technology and advises companies on how to ensure they don't miss the next big technological breakthrough. But he didn't start this way.

Carroll received his commerce degree in 1979. By 1981, he was a chartered accountant with an office in downtown Halifax. It was there that Carroll's career direction started to change.

"Our office had just bought their first computer," says Carroll. "I sent my first e-mail to a guy in California and I got a response. I ended up spending all my time dialing into online bulletin boards. My accounting friends said I was throwing my career away."

And in a strange way, Carroll's friends were right. He did throw away his career – in favour of a new one. The company Carroll worked for noticed his interest in computers and asked him to help bring the company into the future. He introduced e-mail, online information research, and knowledge exchange to the firm's offices across Canada. Carroll's work was noticed by the company's head office and he was transferred to Toronto to help put the company on a road to the future. From 1985 to 1989, Carroll and the team brought what is now understood as the Internet to 3,000 clients and staff worldwide. That was almost 10 years before anything resembling today's Internet was in widespread use.

In 1990, a year after *Office Automation Magazine* heralded Carroll's work as leading edge, the firm told him they didn't understand his interest in pursuing futuristic technology. Carroll took that as a cue and quit.

Just four years after leaving the accounting firm, he published the Canadian Internet Handbook. It became a number one best-seller on the *Financial Post* and *Toronto Star* lists. Canadian publishers say it takes 5,000 copies sold to be a best-seller. The 1994/95 edition of Carroll's Canadian Internet Handbook sold 100,000 copies. The book launched Carroll onto the international public speaking circuit. In the last decade, he's delivered over 1,000 major presentations, written over 600 articles, published 35 books, and been interviewed more than 3,000 times. One of his books, Selling Online, is the only book ever internationally sponsored by VISA. Carroll's clients have included Air Canada, AT&T, Blue Cross, Glaxo Wellcome.

"I have something to say that has practical business content," says Carroll. "Because of my BCom background I can put technology in the specific context of businesses I'm working with."

The practical business approach has built an impressive track record for Carroll. He's globally recognized as a consultant on business trends, best practices and strategic planning. His greatest asset is his uncanny ability to predict business and technological trends.

"It's all about separating fact from fiction," says Carroll. "For example, we won't have fridges that read the barcodes of our

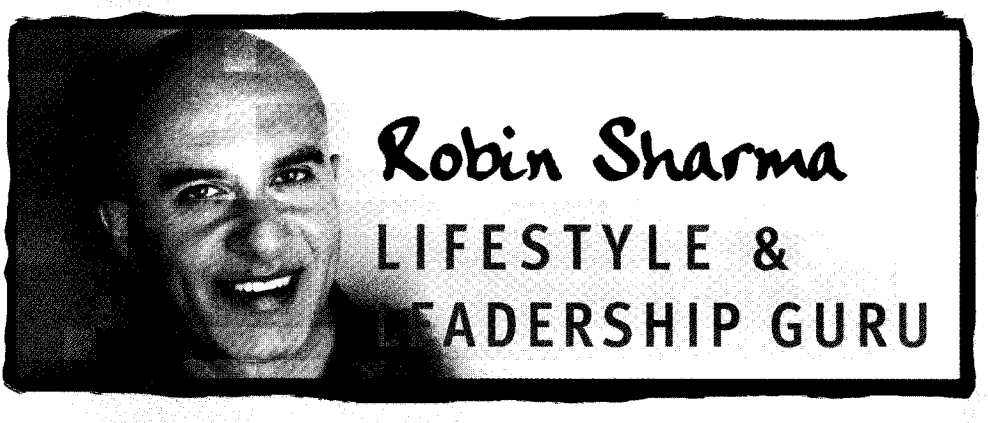
food and reorder the groceries. But at the same time, we know there will never be another generation that isn't impacted by a computer. Already, the average Canadian interacts with more than 130 computer chips before lunch."

Back in his home, Carroll's work is far from traditional. But it's something he's passionate about.

"I marvel at the number of people who are miserable in their job, and are trapped and don't know what to do about it. For me, this is a way to evangelize the opportunities of a world that's massively connected."

In his job, Carroll walks downstairs to his home office. His wife, also an accountant, left her job to work at home, too. Carroll doesn't work from nine to five. Instead he gets up at five and works until three, freeing himself to be with his kids when they return from school. He calls it "time shifting," predicts it's the next big trend and says it's also the greatest benefit of his non-traditional career.

"There will be more and more time shifting over the next few years," says Carroll. "For me it means I spend more time with my family and that's important to me." dal



# Robin Sharma

## LIFESTYLE & LEADERSHIP GURU

In many ways, Robin Sharma (BSc'85, LLB'88, LLM'90) has time shifted his life, too.

When Sharma entered law school at Dalhousie, he was like most other students. He'd just finished a bachelor's degree and wanted nothing more than to become one of the best and brightest young lawyers in Canada. Before long, he was well on his way to both a bachelor's and master's of law.

"My fondest memories are of our fledgling rock band playing 'Louie Louie' at Domus frat parties," says Sharma. "I expected to be a litigation lawyer until the end of my days. I'd clerked for the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal after completing my master's and then articled on Bay Street."

After Bay Street, Sharma joined the Justice Department in Toronto. Between 80-hour work weeks, he wrote a book called Mega Living. Given that his law career would be considered distinguished in the boardrooms of Toronto's Bay Street, it was a surprise to some that Sharma's career path was about to turn sharply away from the courtroom.

"My self-published book was discovered in a Chapters bookstore by the president of publishing giant, HarperCollins," says Sharma. "They rolled out the book nationally, and then in 20 other countries."

Mega Living began as a photocopy edited by Sharma's mother. It quickly gained a life of its own, selling almost 50,000 copies. Sharma was still practising law when he wrote his second book, The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari. That book zoomed to the international best-seller list and launched Sharma onto the world stage as an author, leadership trainer and sought-after public speaker.

"It felt right for me to leave my job as a litigator," says Sharma. "I had found not only something I love, but a calling. My calling."

Sharma's now an international authority on leadership, change and personal effectiveness. His schedule includes about 75 speaking engagements a year and he headlines many major events. His clients include all the big names – from Microsoft, General Motors and IBM, to FedEx.

"My books and speeches focus on engaging people at a core level so that they experience inner shifts that lead to lasting change," explains Sharma. "My firm, Sharma Leadership International, works with Fortune 500 companies to help employees develop into true leaders."

Sharma has also shared the stage as a speaker with some of the world's best-known presenters including Bill Clinton, Dr. Phil and Christopher Reeve. He doesn't, however, define himself as a motivational speaker.

"I dislike the term 'motivational speaker,'" says Sharma. "I help people discover their best lives and highest leadership capacities using well-researched processes."

One of Sharma's recent books, Who Will Cry When You Die?, about personal legacies and ensuring lasting value from our actions, was deemed one of the "10 Best Leadership Books in Canada of 2001" by *The Globe and Mail*. He recently finished his sixth book, The Saint, The Surfer and The CEO: A Remarkable Story about Living Your Heart's Desires.

Sharma's love for what he does echoes the love Gallander and Carroll have for their work. Sharma, like the other Dal grads, says he lives on his own terms rather than someone else's. That, he says, frees him to be authentic and follow his heart.

"I love what I do because I feel that I'm making a difference in people's lives," says Sharma. "People have a deep desire to change once they move their internal blocks out of the way. We all have a hunger to live great lives." dal